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Manhattan Project National Historical Park Proposal Again Passes the House, Advances to the Senate

House Committee on Natural Resources

May 22, 2014

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WASHINGTON, D.C., May 22, 2014 - The House of Representatives today approved the National Defense Authorization Act of 2015, which included a bipartisan provision sponsored by Natural Resources Committee Chairman Doc Hastings (WA-04) to establish a Manhattan Project National Historical Park. The Manhattan Project was an unprecedented top-secret program to construct a nuclear weapon that ultimately played an integral part in ending World War II. Hastings' amendment would protect and provide public access to Manhattan Project facilities at Hanford, Washington; Oak Ridge, Tennessee; and Los Alamos, New Mexico.

"This is a positive step towards establishing the Manhattan Project National Historical Park. There is strong, bipartisan support for this measure and it enjoys broad support from local communities and national advocates for historic preservation and parks. The goal is to enact this into law before the end of this year and today's action demonstrates real progress towards achieving it," said Chairman Hastings.

The provision authorizes the establishment of the Manhattan Project National Historical Park as a unit of the National Park System within one year. It specifies the facilities and areas at each of the three locations that are eligible for inclusion in the Park. Nearly every facility and area is already owned by the federal government and under the authority of the Department of Energy. The provision requires coordination, planning, and cooperation between the National Park Service and the Department of Energy to ensure safe and secure access to these locations.

The establishment of the Manhattan Project National Historical Park is supported by the Department of the Interior, Department of Energy, and the National Park Service.

State: WIPP must permanently close underground panels

Current-Argus

May 20, 2014

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CARLSBAD -- The state of New Mexico will force WIPP to close some of its underground nuclear waste storage areas much sooner than anticipated.

NM Environment Department Sec. Ryan Flynn issued an order on Tuesday that requires the Department of Energy to speed up the process to permanently seal off some rooms used to store transuranic nuclear waste in drums like the one suspected of causing February's radiation leak at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant located 26 miles southeast of Carlsbad.

The DOE must submit a plan detailing the process for an expedited closure of Panel 6 and Panel 7, Room 7 at WIPP within 10 days so the containers don't "pose a threat to human health or the environment," according to the order issued by Flynn. The state agency clarified the order does not mean a permanent shutdown of the whole WIPP facility.

Congressman Steve Pearce, however, said he believes the state is acting beyond its authority.

"The first thing is the secretary did not call our office or let us know in any way," said Congressman Steve Pearce, R-Hobbs. "I don't think we're at the point to say we should shut it down. I don't think the state has the expertise (to be making the decision) so I don't think there could be a good outcome." According to the state order, the waste is subject to the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, a federal environmental law, and the Environmental Protection Agency has granted the state of New Mexico authority to enforce the law at federal sites within the state.

The request follows a separate administrative order by Flynn on Monday requiring Los Alamos National Laboratory to submit a plan to secure waste containers destined for WIPP. State officials announced this week that the DOE was analyzing 57 drums of waste containing a mixture of kitty litter and nitrate salts suspected of causing a reaction that led to the radiation leak.

Investigators are still considering a number of theories for the incident, but the DOE announced last week that photographs taken underground showed a waste container with a cracked lid and heat damage, providing further evidence of a "significant heat event in WIPP's Room 7 of Panel 7." The 57 barrels of waste originated from Los Alamos and Savannah River National Laboratory in South Carolina.

The drums in question are scattered across the state at Los Alamos, WIPP and Waste Control Specialists, a private nuclear waste disposal facility in Andrews County, Texas, straddling the Texas-New Mexico

border. The number of drums stored at each site is unclear, but a spokesman for WCS said the DOE and Los Alamos officials notified the company which drums were in question, and the company has since segregated those drums from the rest of the waste WCS is temporarily holding for WIPP.

"We know the containers in question and they're being monitored," said Chuck McDonald, a spokesman for WCS. "From the outset of this process, WCS has treated this waste with the utmost caution and we are taking all conceivable safety measures. They are under video surveillance 24 hours a day, so if there was anything unusual, we would take action immediately."

Hastings wants to block plutonium shipments to Hanford

Tri-City Herald

May 20, 2014

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The Department of Energy would not be allowed to study sending plutonium to Hanford under an amendment that Rep. Doc Hastings, R-Wash., has submitted.

It is one of three Hanford-related amendments Hastings has filed to be considered in the fiscal 2015 National Defense Authorization Act. The House is expected to begin hearing more than 300 proposed amendments to the bill Wednesday.

The Obama administration has proposed halting construction of the Mixed Oxide Fuel Fabrication Facility, or MOX, at Savannah River, S.C., which had been planned to convert surplus weapons plutonium into fuel for commercial power reactors. It is concerned about the rising costs of the plant.

DOE released a report in April looking at five possible alternatives to MOX for plutonium disposition. They include sending plutonium to Hanford for treatment at the vitrification plant under construction or irradiating some of the plutonium at the deactivated Fast Flux Test Facility at Hanford.

Hastings' amendment would bar DOE from studying those options as long as DOE is missing any legally binding environmental cleanup deadlines, is at risk of missing deadlines or is in dispute resolution over deadlines. The restrictions would apply to the Tri-Party Agreement and the 2010 court-enforced consent decree.

DOE and the state of Washington are in dispute resolution over the consent decree after DOE notified the state it was at risk of meeting most of the consent decree's remaining deadlines.

The amendment would prevent time and money from being wasted to study options that are not workable and could detract from real cleanup work, according to Hastings' staff.

The April report on plutonium disposition said that glassifying the waste at Hanford would have unacceptable technical, regulatory, financial and other risks that could derail completion of the plant, which is already

behind schedule. Significant research and demonstration would be needed for plutonium disposition to determine the loading limits of each glass canister, modify the plant's design and develop controls to prevent an unplanned nuclear reaction.

The report also concluded that FFTF, a research reactor, would only be practical for disposing of plutonium in conjunction with the construction of a new reactor.

Hastings also wants to add an amendment to the defense bill that would require public access to the top of Rattlesnake Mountain, which is owned by DOE as part of the security perimeter of Hanford and managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as part of the Hanford Reach National Monument.

The bill would require motor vehicle access and nonmotorized access, but allow access to be controlled through guided tours.

The House passed similar legislation last year, but there was no Senate sponsor for the bill.

Hastings' third amendment would restore \$20 million of the proposed cut to defense environmental cleanup.

Although its use is not specified, it could help pave the way to restore \$20 million of about \$100 million proposed to be cut from the DOE Hanford Richland Operations Office budget. The Hanford budget still is set by the House and Senate Appropriations Committees, but increasing the spending authorization amount eliminates a possible obstacle to that.

The \$20 million increase would come from a reduction of funding for some nuclear weapons-related research.

The bill already includes two Hanford-related sections inserted by Hastings.

It requires the creation of a Manhattan Project National Historical Park, which would include Hanford's B Reactor, within a year of passage of the bill.

It also requires that DOE turn over two parcels of Hanford land -- 1,341 acres and 300 acres -- to Hanford's designated community reuse organization, the Tri-City Development Council, by the end of the year. The land is among a small portion of Hanford land planned to be used for industrial development, with most of the 586-square-mile nuclear reservation planned for conservation and preservation use as environmental cleanup is completed.

Michigan lawmakers seek to stop plans for nuclear waste site near Lake Huron

The Detroit News

May 19, 2014

[LINK](#)

Michigan lawmakers are trying to build momentum for stopping Canadian plans to construct a nuclear waste storage facility close to the shore of Lake Huron.

For years, Ontario Power Generation has pushed to construct a deep geologic repository -- a massive underground storage facility to handle low- to intermediate-level nuclear wastes -- on the grounds of its Bruce nuclear facility near Kincardine, Ontario. The company wants to locate its storage facility 2,230 feet below the ground and three-quarters of a mile from the Lake Huron shore.

State Senate and House members said Monday they plan to introduce legislation this week that would:

- Stop the importation of radioactive waste into Michigan from Canada.
- Request President Barack Obama and federal lawmakers take a stance on the storage proposal.
- Request Secretary of State John Kerry officially ask the International Joint Commission to issue a binding decision on the Canadian proposal.

"The proposed facility would pose a critical threat to the health of the Great Lakes and other natural resources throughout Michigan," said state Sen. Phil Pavlov, R-St. Clair Township, in a statement released Monday. "I take very seriously my duty as a legislator to protect our natural resources and public health. That is why I will continue to fight the development of this site and ask my fellow residents to join in this effort."

Pavlov is hoping to make it easy for residents by creating an online petition -- ProtectLakeHuron.com -- calling for presidential action on the repository project.

Environmental groups also are dismayed by the nuclear storage proposal.

"Burying nuclear waste a quarter-mile from the Great Lakes is a shockingly bad idea -- it poses a serious threat to people, fish, wildlife, and the lakes themselves," said Andy Buchsbaum, regional executive director for the National Wildlife Federation's Great Lakes Regional Center, in a Monday statement.

"We support this legislative package that asks Canada to reconsider its plan to store large amounts of radioactive waste on the shores of Lake Huron. It's time to go back to the drawing board to find a solution that doesn't put our Great Lakes, environment, communities, and economy at risk."

The International Joint Commission is a bi-national body created more than 100 years ago to help solve disputes between the United States and Canada. In October, U.S. Sens. Debbie Stabenow and Carl Levin of Michigan sent a letter to Kerry's office requesting he have the IJC look into the repository project, but the request so far has not been made.

For much of the past year, officials in Ontario Power Generation officials have hosted public information meetings in the communities surrounding the proposed repository site. The company recently submitted the results

of the comment period along with its research to the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission's Joint Review Panel, which will submit its own report in the coming months.

When the panel submits its report, the Ministry of the Environment has four months to approve or reject the proposal.

